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**SAUDI AWACS SALE**

Q. In the aftermath of Israel's strike on Iraq's nuclear reactor, and in light of the fact that majorities of both Houses of Congress have signed statements requesting the Administration not to send the AWACS sale proposal to the Hill, does the Administration plan to go forward with this proposal? If so, will any changes be made in the proposal, and what do you think are its chances of passing?

A. -- Let me first emphasize that while we have condemned the Israeli operation against Iraq's nuclear facility, the attack and its aftermath have in no way altered our unshakeable commitment to Israel's security.

-- We have not undertaken nor will we undertake any policy initiatives inconsistent with this commitment. Our proposal to sell AWACS early warning aircraft and other equipment to the Saudis does not violate this policy.

-- These aircraft are needed by the Saudis to improve their ability to defend the oil facilities in the eastern part of their country against air attack -- a purpose in which we share a vital interest.

-- We are proposing this sale at a time when our security posture in this region requires improvement. A continued close security relationship with Saudi Arabia is a key element of our regional strategy.

-- Therefore, we certainly do plan to go forward with the proposal to sell AWACS as well as the so-called F-15 enhancement package.

--When we present the package to the Congress, we will also provide information on associated arrangements which we expect to mitigate many Congressional concerns. These are not yet finalized and I believe it would be inappropriate to go into further details at this time. I can tell you, however, that they address the security of the AWACS system, safeguards against possible misuse, and other issues.

--In light of this, I am optimistic that when Congree considers the entire package, Congress will agree with us that it is in our country's best interests.